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Jersey City Consultant Indicted for Allegedly Providing Cash Bribes to a Jersey City Official

(More)

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NEWARK – Jersey City consultant Joseph Cardwell was indicted today in connection with his agreement to provide a \$10,000 bribe payment to a Jersey City official in order to influence that official regarding real estate development matters in Jersey City, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

The Indictment charges that Cardwell accepted \$10,000 in cash from a government cooperating witness (CW) with the understanding that Cardwell would provide the money to a specific Jersey City official, who had influence over real estate development matters (identified in the Indictment as the “JC Official”), in an attempt to secure that official’s assistance with the CW’s purported real estate projects in Jersey City. The Indictment alleges that Cardwell accepted two separate \$10,000 cash payments from the CW in exchange for making and attempting to make this bribe payment to the official.

The Indictment stems from an undercover FBI political corruption and international money laundering investigation that became public on July 23, 2009. Cardwell was arrested on a criminal Complaint on that day.

Cardwell will appear in federal court for arraignment on the Indictment after the case is assigned to a U.S. District Judge.

According to the Indictment, Cardwell met with the CW on July 1 and July 14, 2008, at which meetings Cardwell was informed that the CW was seeking Cardwell’s assistance with obtaining real estate development approvals in Jersey City and that the CW wanted to be introduced to officials who were willing to accept corrupt payments in exchange for official action. At the July 1, 2008, meeting, the Indictment alleges, Cardwell accepted a \$10,000 payment from the CW in exchange for his assistance in making such introductions.

The Indictment further alleges that in July and August 2008, Cardwell offered to introduce the CW to the JC Official, who Cardwell described to the CW as one of Cardwell’s “guys,” and gave advice to the CW as to how to provide a corrupt payment to the JC Official. According to the Indictment, Cardwell told the CW that he would speak to the JC Official ahead of time about the corrupt payment but would excuse himself to the bathroom at the time the payment was actually going to be offered.

According to the Indictment, Cardwell and the CW met with the JC Official on Aug. 14, 2008, at a restaurant in Jersey City. As had been discussed, Cardwell spoke to the JC Official outside the CW’s presence first, then excused himself to the bathroom. When the CW later offered the JC Official a corrupt payment, however, the JC Official declined to accept it. According to the Indictment, Cardwell told the CW that he would “handle that” and that “that ain’t a problem.” Later in the meeting, Cardwell told the CW that the JC Official wanted the CW to “go through” Cardwell. The next day, according to the Indictment, Cardwell accepted two \$10,000 cash payments from the CW — one for the JC Official and one for himself — and told the CW that “we’ll do things [the JC Official’s]

way.” At later meetings, held on Sept. 5, 2008, and March 27, 2009, Cardwell explained to the CW that rather than accepting cash directly, the JC Official had requested that Cardwell handle the payment by using the money to purchase tickets for fundraising events benefitting another Jersey City official.

The Indictment charges Cardwell with one count of giving, offering, and agreeing to give things of value to the JC Official in connection with a business or transaction or series of transactions with Jersey City, an entity receiving more than \$10,000 in federal funds during a specified one-year period. The offense carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Kevin B. Cruise, and the IRS Criminal Investigation Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord, with the ongoing investigation. Fishman also thanked the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin, for their assistance in the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig.

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Defense counsel: Henry E. Klingeman, Esq. Newark